

What is claimed is:

1. An endoscope equipment shipping device, comprising:

an inflatable bladder that is configured to fit within a standard case supplied with new flexible endoscope equipment when foam inserts are removed from the standard case;

a plurality of baffles located at predetermined locations in the bladder such that when the bladder is inflated, the shipping device takes the form of the standard case's interior volume when the foam inserts are removed from the standard case; and

a valve located adjacent the inflatable bladder.

2. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the inflatable bladder is shaped such that when the inflatable bladder is configured for shipping it forms a pouch with a front side, a rear side, and an open edge, the front side and rear side being configured to contain the endoscope equipment therebetween when the bladder is configured for shipping, and the open edge having a seal for closing the pouch.

3. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the baffles include a plurality of horizontally oriented baffles and at least one vertically oriented baffle.

4. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the shipping device has a maximum height and maximum width of approximately 16 inches by approximately 22 inches, respectively, when in a totally inflated state.

5. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the shipping device has a maximum thickness of approximately 5 inches when in a totally inflated state.

6. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the bladder is configured to form a pouch such that the shipping device has three closed edges, an open edge, and a front side and a rear side, and the bladder includes a plurality of horizontally oriented baffles in the front side of the shipping device, and a plurality of horizontally oriented baffles in the rear side of the shipping device.

7. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 6, wherein the bladder includes a baffle configured to frame the plurality of horizontally oriented baffles in the front side of the shipping device.

8. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the shipping device has a maximum height and maximum width of approximately 16 inches by approximately 22 inches, respectively, when in an inflated state and configured for placement into the standard case supplied with a new flexible endoscope when the foam inserts are removed from the standard case.

9. The endoscope equipment shipping device of claim 1, wherein the shipping device includes a front side attached to a rear side by a hinge portion, and the shipping device has a maximum height and maximum width of approximately 16 inches by approximately 22 inches when in the inflated state and configured for shipment, such that when the shipping device is

configured for shipment, it fits into the standard case supplied with a new flexible endoscope when the foam inserts are removed from the standard case.

10. An equipment shipping kit, comprising:

a pouch formed by at least one inflatable bladder and including,

a plurality of baffles, and

a valve located adjacent to the inflatable bladder; and

a primary pouch including an open end having a seal.

11. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, further comprising:

a secondary pouch including an open end having a seal.

12. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, further comprising:

a plurality of caps configured to be placed over portions of the equipment to protect the pouch during shipment of the equipment.

13. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, further comprising:

a return pouch formed by at least one inflatable bladder and including

a plurality of baffles,

an opening located at an end of said return pouch, and

a valve located adjacent the inflatable bladder of the return pouch.

14. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, wherein the pouch includes an inner layer made from polyethylene /nylon/polyethylene co-extrusion.

15. The medical equipment package of claim 10, wherein the pouch includes an outer layer made from nylon/polyethylene laminate.

16. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, wherein the pouch includes a top portion, a bottom portion, and a hinge connecting the top portion and bottom portion.

17. The equipment shipping kit of claim 16, wherein the pouch includes an adherence portion located at one of the top portion and the bottom portion such that when the pouch is folded along the hinge, the top portion and bottom portion can be adhered to each other to form a containment area between the top portion and bottom portion.

18. The equipment shipping kit of claim 10, wherein the seal at the open end of the primary pouch is a waterproof seal.

19. A method for shipping medical equipment, comprising:

providing a pouch formed by at least one bladder including a plurality of baffles, and a valve located in communication with the bladder;

providing a plurality of protective structures,

placing the protective structures over portions of the medical equipment;

placing the medical equipment onto the pouch;

inflating the pouch via the valve; and

shipping the medical equipment and pouch.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

sealing the pouch via a seal.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

providing a primary pouch; and

placing the medical equipment into the primary pouch prior to shipping.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

providing a secondary pouch; and

placing the medical equipment and primary pouch into the secondary pouch prior to

shipping.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein the medical equipment is an endoscope.

24. The method of claim 19, wherein the medical equipment is not disinfected prior to shipping.

25. The method of claim 19, wherein the pouch includes a top portion, a bottom portion, and a hinge connecting the top portion and bottom portion, and placing the medical equipment on the pouch includes folding the pouch along the hinge to form a containment space between the top portion and bottom portion.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:
adhering the top portion to the bottom portion of the pouch to contain the medical equipment therein.

27. A method for shipping medical equipment, comprising:

providing an inflatable pouch formed by at least one bladder including a plurality of baffles, and a valve located adjacent the bladder;

providing a primary pouch;

placing the medical equipment into the primary pouch;

sealing the primary pouch;

placing the primary pouch on the inflatable pouch;

inflating the inflatable pouch via the valve; and

shipping the medical equipment, primary pouch and inflatable pouch.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

providing a secondary pouch;

placing the primary pouch into the secondary pouch;

placing the secondary pouch on the inflatable pouch; and

shipping the secondary pouch with the medical equipment, primary pouch and inflatable pouch.

29. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

providing caps; and

placing the caps over portions of the medical equipment to protect the inflatable pouch from the medical equipment.

30. The method of claim 27, wherein the medical equipment includes an endoscope.

31. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

providing a case, and

placing the inflatable pouch and medical equipment into the case prior to shipping.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the case is a cardboard box.

33. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

providing a second inflatable pouch, and

shipping the second inflatable pouch with the first inflatable pouch and medical equipment.

34. The method of claim 27, wherein the inflatable pouch includes a top portion, a bottom portion, and a hinge connecting the top portion and bottom portion, and

the placing of the medical equipment on the inflatable package includes folding the inflatable pouch along the hinge to form a containment space between the top portion and bottom portion.

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:

adhering the top portion to the bottom portion of the inflatable pouch to contain the medical equipment therein.

36. A method for shipping medical equipment, comprising:

providing an inflatable pouch formed by at least one bladder including a plurality of baffles, and a valve located adjacent the bladder;

providing a case;

placing the medical equipment onto the inflatable pouch;

inflating the inflatable pouch via the valve;

placing the inflatable pouch in the case; and

shipping the medical equipment, inflatable pouch and case.

37. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

providing a primary pouch;

placing the medical equipment into the primary pouch;

placing the primary pouch on the inflatable pouch; and

shipping the primary pouch with the medical equipment, inflatable pouch and case.

38. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

providing protective structures; and

placing the protective structures over portions of the medical equipment to protect the inflatable pouch from the medical equipment.

39. The method of claim 36, wherein the medical equipment includes an endoscope.

40. The method of claim 36, wherein the case is a cardboard box.

41. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

providing a second inflatable pouch, and

shipping the second inflatable pouch with the first inflatable pouch and medical equipment.

42. The method of claim 36, wherein the inflatable pouch includes a top portion, a bottom portion, and a hinge connecting the top portion and bottom portion, and placing the medical equipment on the inflatable package includes folding the inflatable pouch along the hinge to form a containment space between the top portion and bottom portion.

43. The method of claim 42, further comprising:
adhering the top portion to the bottom portion of the inflatable pouch to contain the medical equipment therein.